

**Security Enhancements for
City Council and Committee Meetings
Public Engagement Report**

February 2017

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Introduction

Ensuring the health, safety, and wellness of citizens, employees, and Councillors is of primary importance to the City. As a result, the City is considering setting up metal detectors and visual inspections for persons wishing to gain access to Council and Committee meeting rooms. The City is also looking at adding mid-height barriers in Council Chamber to better define public and private spaces. These barriers would allow time to react if anyone were to attempt harm to staff or Councillors. Similar measures are used in other Canadian municipalities.

Objectives and Methodology

The objectives of this public engagement was to gather public opinion on the following key questions:

- Would going through metal detectors and having their bags searched affect the likeliness of people participating in Council and Committee meetings?
- Would having participants go through metal detectors and having their bags searched make people feel safer when attending Council and Committee meetings?
- Has going through metal directors or having their bags searched ever stopped people from taking part in activities in spaces such as airports, law court buildings, sporting events or concert venues?
- Would installing a mid-height barrier in Council Chamber affect participation in Council meetings? And if so, why?

These objectives were addressed by:

- Including a series of questions about security enhancements for City Council and Committee Meetings in the Edmonton Insight Community Monthly Mixed Topic Survey for February 2017. At the time of the survey, the Insight Community had 6,578 members. This survey was also available to members of the general public on the City of Edmonton web site and a link was promoted through social media.
- The survey was available for completion from February 14 to 21, 2017.
- 2,018 Edmonton Insight Community members completed the survey for a response rate of 31%. 49 members of the general public also completed the survey.

Results

- Only 20% of participants agreed that they would be less likely to participate in Committee and Council meetings if they had to go through a metal detector to gain access to the meeting room. 55% disagreed with this and 20% were neutral.
- 43% of participants agreed that they would feel safer attending Council and Committee meetings if they knew that persons attending the meeting had gone through a metal detector prior to entering. 29% disagreed with this and 25% were neutral.
- Only 20% of participants agreed that they would be less likely to participate in Council and Committee meetings if they knew their bags would be visually inspected by staff prior to them accessing the meeting. 55% disagreed with this and 21% were neutral.

- 40% of participants agreed that they would feel safer attending Council and Committee meetings if they knew that persons attending the meeting had their bags searched prior to entering. 31% disagreed with this and 26% were neutral.
- 88% of respondents indicated that metal detectors and bag searches at airports, law court buildings, and sporting and concert venues have not stopped them from taking part in activities in these spaces. 10% said these measures had stopped them.
- 58% of respondents disagreed with the statement “A mid-height barrier would affect my participation in Council and Committee meetings.” 14% agreed with it and 23% were neutral.
- The participants who agreed with the statement were asked why this barrier would affect their participation. 245 provided an answer. The common themes, in order of frequency, were:
 - The perception it creates about safety, participation, trust, democracy: 73%
 - It is unnecessary and/or will be ineffective: 30%
 - It could negatively impact the view and/or hearing: 7%
- Respondents were asked if they had any comments regarding security measures for City council and committee meetings. 705 provided an answer (35% of respondents). The common themes, in order of frequency, were:
 - It is unnecessary and/or will be ineffective: 38%
 - The proposed safety measures are necessary/important: 32%
 - Why is security a concern: 13%
 - The perception it creates about safety, participation, trust, democracy: 5%

Appendix 1 - Survey Questions

Ensuring the health, safety, and wellness of citizens, employees, and Councillors is of primary importance to the City. As a result, the City is considering setting up metal detectors and visual inspections for persons wishing to gain access to Council and Committee meeting rooms. The City is also looking at adding mid-height barriers in Council Chamber to better define public and private spaces. These barriers would allow time to react if anyone were to attempt harm to staff or Councillors. Similar measures are used in other Canadian municipalities.

Q1. Please let us know if you agree or disagree with the following statements regarding security measures for Council and Committee members:

Q1a I would be less likely to participate in Committee and Council meetings if I had to go through a metal detector to gain access to the meeting room.

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree
- I don't know

Q1b. I would be less likely to participate in Council and Committee meetings if I knew my bags would be visually inspected by staff prior to my accessing the meeting.

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree
- I don't know

Q1c. I would feel safer attending Council and Committee meetings if I knew that persons attending the meeting had gone through a metal detector prior to entering.

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree
- I don't know

Q1d. I would feel safer attending Council and Committee meetings if I knew that persons attending the meeting had their bags searched prior to entering.

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree
- I don't know

Q2. Metal detectors and bag searches are common at airports, law court buildings, and even sporting and concert venues. Have these safety measures ever stopped you from taking part in activities in these spaces? Please select one response only.

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

Q3. <image of proposed mid-height barriers in Council Chamber>

Do you feel that a mid-height barrier similar to the one in the picture above would affect your participation in Council and Committee meetings? Please let us know if you agree or disagree with the following: "A mid-height barrier would affect my participation in Council and Committee meetings". Please select one response only.

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know

<If Strongly agree or Somewhat agree>

Q3b. Why would this barrier affect your participation?

- <open end>

Q4. Do you have any comments regarding security measures for City council and committee meetings?

- <open end>